

A Five-Minute Introduction To Gate Automation

What Can Be Automated?

Most gates can be automated, as long as both the gate and its post/pillar are strong. The gate must swing freely and must not catch on the ground.

The main point to remember is that the automation equipment fixes to just one part of the gate which then takes the entire opening/closing load, sometimes in high winds. The key to reliability is to ensure that the gate is suitably strengthened for automation. In the last 15 years our approved contractors have successfully automated in excess of 1000 gates, ranging from brand new to over 100 years old. We aim to over-engineer, so that the gate and automation work reliably in all seasons.

How Does The Automation Work?

Automatic gates are either swinging (or hinged) gates, or else they 'slide', usually on a rail (also known as a track). Probably 95% of all automatic gates are 'swing' gates. Sliding gates are used in awkward drive entrances, or where parking space is at a premium.

There are 3 main types of swing gate 'operator':

The Ram

A ram unit fits behind the gate, usually near the middle but can be at the top/bottom, and pushes or pulls the gate open & closed.

The Underground

The underground unit is set into the roadway and is near-invisible. Almost always, it forms the bottom hinge of that gate and the hidden motor turns to open or close the gate.

The Articulated Arm

This is designed especially for gates hanging on large brick piers, where an underground unit is not appropriate. It is also exceptionally good for large barn doors!



Out of Ground Gate Operators (The Ram)



The Articulated Arm

How Does the System Operate?

Most customers opt for a remote control handset, generally kept in the car. Operating the handset opens the gate(s). Some systems require a second press of the handset to close the gates but others will be configured so that the gates close automatically – generally where the gates are keeping children or animals secure.

There are many other ways to operate the gates, ranging from a simple pushbutton through to 'digipads', swipe cards, roadway vehicle sensors, intercoms and even mobile phones. Every Suffolk Gates system is designed specifically around the customer's needs.



The Underground



Which Type to Choose?

In some situations, only one system will fit the bill. Often, 2 or more types could be used and the decision is then down to cost. Broadly, ram systems are least costly. To make the choice more confusing, either system can be 'hydraulic' or 'electromechanical'!

Hydraulic or Electromechanical?

Hydraulic gate operators use an electric pump and pressurise fluid, to open/close the gate. *Electromechanical* units are simpler and work by means of an electric motor connected to the gate through a gearbox and mechanical link.

There are pros and cons with both systems.

Hydraulic are particularly suited to intensive use situations and operate more smoothly. If well-maintained, they are reliable and can last for 15+ years. However, they are more costly to install than electromechanical.



Electromechanical are generally robust and reliable (our first unit is still working after 11 years). Again, routine servicing is important but, if they do fail, they are easy to repair.

Which Make to Choose?

There are a bewildering variety of makes. The mainstream UK brands are BFT, FAAC, NICE, CAME and GENIUS. We have installed or maintained all these makes through our 'approved contractors' and can vouch for their quality of construction.

Be cautious of 'bargain' offers. These units, usually sold by mail order, are often low-cost copies of the main brands. Spares and backup service for these products is, at best, hit-and-miss.



The Slider

